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C.M.S NEWS-LETTER

Dear Fellow-member of C.M.S.,

India commands the love of the three hundred and fifty million of her own people, and the affectionate regard, respect and concern of many millions beyond. To understand India, even when she is most difficult to understand and when her own children cannot easily explain her, is a task which should engage the best efforts of all who care for the peace of the world and especially of those who are committed to the Gospel of reconciliation.

TOWARDS THE INDIA OF TO-MORROW

The impulse of religion
The impulse of revolution
The impulse of self-respect
The impulse of Christ and His Church

THE IMPULSE OF RELIGION

This NEWS-LETTER is offered as a brief essay in understanding. And I begin, where better, with the words of a prayer much used by those who in the Sarvodaya Movement are seeking to bring a deep spirit of sympathy to the practical task of lifting to a new dignity the underprivileged masses of that great country. The prayer runs:

"O King of humility, whose abode is in the simple cottage of a poor sweeper, help us to search for thee in this beautiful land watered by the rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Brahmaputra. Grant us an open and receptive heart, thy own humility, power and longing to be one with the people of India. O God, thou dost help man when he empties himself and comes under thy protection. Grant us thy blessing that we may never be separated from the people whom we serve as their servants and friends. Make us embodiments of sacrifice, devotion and humility, so that we may understand our country better and love it the more."

Any Christian can make that prayer his own for his own country. And those Christians, albeit foreigners, who seek to serve India will join with the Christians of India in making it one expression of their own longing.

Few things are more important for the future of the world than the fact that in India the attempt to create a State in which the welfare of the common man is truly served is being undergirded with a deep religious impulse. If it may fairly be claimed that this impulse owes much to the passion for Christ's poor which has inspired so much of the missionary movement in India, it must no less fairly be conceded that for many in India the impulse derives from a determined attempt to draw inspiration from the well of India's own religious traditions. Obviously this heightened awareness of the need for self-sacrifice on the part of the fortunate for the unfortunate is something which the Christians will welcome. No less obviously it presents a real challenge to Christian thinking when it is coupled with a religious philosophy that insists on the equal relevance of all religions, and the primary need to contribute the best ideas of each to the common pool. Has the Christian something to contribute which is, strictly speaking, unique? If so, how does he make this contribution when this claim of "something unique" is repudiated, sometimes with an almost passionate resentment? How does the Christian truly serve the "King of humility"? These are not easy questions to answer, yet they are among the most urgent that are pressing upon the Christians of India to-day. In two issues of the journal *Religion and Society*, those for December, 1957 and March, 1958, we can see the problem through Indian eyes and Christian eyes at the same time. Here we see admirably set forth both "A Christian approach to *Sarvodaya*" and the "Christian basis of social concern". I would judge these two issues of this journal to be amongst the most important reading for those who would understand India to-day and the tremendous challenge now being presented to the Christian Church in India.

Another invaluable source of understanding, again edited by the editors of the journal *Religion and Society*, is a small book of essays by a number of distinguished Indians entitled *Human Person, Society and State*. In particular I would draw attention to the essay by an Indian psychoanalyst, Shri K. V. Rajan, of Lucknow, entitled "Man, Society and Nation". This brilliant analysis of

social life in India, of the joint-family system, of the relationships of marriage and the home, of caste rigidity, of the difficulty of building a nation, is a fine illustration of positive self-criticism; it contains much that is relevant to Africa and to the West. We can sometimes learn quite a bit about ourselves by observing our neighbours!

THE IMPULSE OF REVOLUTION

Having paid tribute to the deep religious feeling which lies at the base of the great social revolution which is slowly increasing in momentum in India, it is of first-rate importance to see this revolution as something sponsored by the Government of India itself. What this means in practice, in careful planning, in mobilization of resources, in high ideals, in disappointments and disillusionments, and in determination to persevere, can be read in a book by Shyama Charan Dube, Professor of Anthropology in the University of Saugar, Sagar, India. In *India's Changing Villages*, he has written an objective survey of one rural development project in the Uttar Pradesh. The programme has not followed an easy course. The general apathy of a considerable part of the village population; their suspicion and distrust of officials and outsiders; the resistance to change provided by tradition and cultural factors; the failure of those engaged to find wholly satisfactory media of communication — all these were obstacles to full success. But a beginning has been made. The very objectivity of this survey, and the refusal of its author to pull any punches in regard to the human factors in community development, inspire confidence and hope. There is a nice humility in the following passage which will appeal to all who confront the task of communication. Shri Dube writes as follows of one publicity unit:

"By using propaganda forms already familiar to the people it was able to attract eager and sympathetic audiences. People could grasp the message of development conveyed in songs and discourses punctuated by humorous anecdotes, village proverbs and folk tales more easily than they could from high-sounding speeches with unfamiliar themes, symbols and language. It is not suggested that the ideas communicated by this unit were *accepted*; the important thing to remember is that they were *understood*."

We do well to heed the implicit warning and admire the explicit courage of the author's summary:

"The Indian community development programme is an impressive and pioneering venture. Its results may influence the developments not only in Asia but in many other technologically under-developed ar of the world as well. In the long run success or failure may vitally affect course of political and social evolution only in India, but in many regions of A and may even have far-reaching impact the world situation. A beginning has b made, but so far it has not done much m than touch the surface of the complex a difficult problems of the Indian mas There are some signs that the great mas of rural India are awakening, but their f steps towards progress have been falter and hesitating. The awakening must followed by determined efforts to chan the vast manpower and human resources the country into creative and product pursuits. The task is vast and challeng and will not admit any self-complace or delay."

THE IMPULSE OF SELF-RESPECT

I have spoken of this great social volution as being something sponso by the Government of India itself. important clue to the understanding the revolution is the understanding what it means to a people to enjoy self-respect of being self-governi Some at least of the bitterness of mu of the nationalism of the contempora world is due to the past blindness those who once ruled now independ peoples, and the present myopia of *so* of those who still represent an al dominion.

In 1929 the then Lord Birkenhead w on record in the House of Lords w the following remarks:

"What man in this House can say that can see in a generation, in two generatio in a hundred years, any prospect that people of India will be in a position assume control of the Army, the Navy, Civil Service, and to have a Govern General who will be responsible to Indian Government and not to any autho in this country?"

In less than a generation all those thi happened. How they happened is ported with a fine sense of historical p portion and genuine fairness of judgm by Shri V. P. Menon in his monumen work *The Transfer of Power in Ind* Concerned for forty years with consti tional development in India and, for last five years, the Governor-Genera Constitutional Adviser, the author been well-qualified for his task and result, as the *Listener* commented, "many of the qualities of a State pape —one would like to add "a *great* St paper". The book is at once the st of a triumph and a tragedy. It is story of the triumph, *in the end*, of fundamental principles of British c stitutionalism, not indeed by virtue o of its own commitment to the princip of justice and liberty, but as aided by remarkable combination in the pers

of Mahatma Gandhi of those principles, learnt in the Inns of Court, with the soul-force of India. And we may add as a further ingredient the integrity of a great company of Indian and British members of the I.C.S. It is indeed the story of a triumph and Shri Menon's book makes this plain. No less is it the story of the tragedy, whose last act, or acts, is still to play, of a sub-continent divided against itself. This is a very humbling book for British, Indians and Pakistanis alike.

I can hardly expect many readers of this NEWS-LETTER to tackle its 534 pages. But I confess to deep regret that I lack the power to make it compulsory reading for those who carry any sort of responsibility for shaping the destinies of East and Central Africa. Or, would the reading simply provoke an echo of the egregious remarks once heard in the House of Lords ?

All that I have attempted so far is to indicate the background to an understanding of India to-day. Would you meet an Indian from that India, see what the transfer of power meant in the growth of a remarkable personality, let me commend the fascinating autobiography of a young Indian, Ved Mehta, with the title, *Face to Face*. Struck with blindness at the age of three and a half, he has lived in a world where, to use his own words, " colours and faces and light and darkness are unknown ". Yet he has also lived with immense verve in the world of those who see. You will not be able to put this book down once you start it !

THE IMPULSE OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

With all that behind us let us look at the Church in India through the eyes of a Christian of that land. She is acutely aware of the powerful forces operating in India to-day. She wants to prove true Dr. Moffatt's translation of 2 Corinthians 13.3—" It is no weak Christ you have to do with but a Christ of power ". She writes in a letter:

" Hinduism with its great assimilative power is attempting by bringing into being new movements to help harmonise and bring about unity in diversity. And the Buddhistic renaissance is doing the same with its sceptic Hinayana teaching which suits the prevailing temper of the many educated people and leaders of India who are tired of Hindu tradition and its many gods. They hope that through Buddhism some kind of unity is possible. We have recently witnessed the late Dr. Ambedkar leading nearly a lakh of Harijans into its fold. Dr. Niyogi, the chairman of the Inquiry Committee into activities of missionaries in Madhya Pradesh, who was himself against conversion, was converted to Buddhism. If indications are any guide, these movements are likely to gain strength. The Indian Christian who lives in India to-day facing all these realities has to reckon with them. How can we do this ? We need a Church which will give us the necessary knowledge, guidance and direction in this line. How often it is true of us that we do very hard and conscientious work in our own limited sphere, which is very good but it is all unrelated to the many forces at play in the country. There are even times when perhaps unconsciously we encourage our fellow Christians in one form or another to retreat to places of safety. Even our Churches are apt to become places of shelter and are afraid to reckon with the forces at work to-day. The Church must be in the midst of these currents and cross currents. To-day the Spirit speaks that this is the place for the Church. Hence it is most essential that all our bits and pieces of work, no matter what they are, running of an ashram or dispensary, preaching or teaching, organising or administration, must all be related in some way or other to these great vital issues. Unity in diversity in our Christian work is our great need. To-day it demands all our attention and the powers of mind and spirit, so that the Indian Church can give lead in this to the country. It is at this point that the Indian Church to-day needs help. In the Indian Church are people from all castes, all religions and cultures united in Christ. This in itself is a proof that unity in diversity is only possible in our common loyalty to Christ. It is also at this point that the Indian Church needs more than ever before the strength of the Christian fellowship of the Churches abroad."

Two small books just published will help the reader to understand something of the rich variety of the Church in India. *Great Venture — the Church of South India in Action*, by A. H. Dammers, is a vividly written personal record, by one who was till recently a missionary, of one man's discoveries during a four year term of service in South India. If I say that this personal account has something of the quality of Bishop Newbigin's *South India Diary* you will not need further persuasion to acquire it. The other book is by another of our C.M.S. missionaries, T. S. Garrett. Under the title of *Worship in the Church of South India* he distils something of the experience he has gained both as a member of the Synod Liturgy Committee of the Church of South India, and as a teacher in the Tamilnad Theological College. Here is ample evidence from another angle of how wonderfully God is blessing that great venture of faith begun in 1947. Both these books provide abundant justification for some words spoken by Bishop Newbigin in his broadcast sermon a year ago when speaking of the tenth birthday of the C.S.I.:

" It has been an exhilarating experience, these ten years, to live with an open future in front of us, to face new problems and to

discover again that when a Church Council or Committee is willing to wait trustfully upon God there is sufficient light for the next step. I hope we shall always live that way. I hope we shall never develop the kind of past which absolutely determines the future and makes prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance a formality."

I think perhaps, albeit a little wistfully, there must be a good many readers of this NEWS-LETTER who would say "Amen" to that.

This NEWS-LETTER began with a *Sarvodaya* prayer. Let it end with the meditation of a Christian from India. In this meditation he is listening to God, as Samuel once did, as each one of us can do—

"I am not an intelligent man. I am no scholar. I have not much conversational talent. I have no impressive personality. I am not an orator. I have no eloquence. I am a weak person. I am shy and timi I am sinful. I waver in my faith. I fo get my vocation. And I find, in spite of these, that God is calling me. I do n understand why He should call me—sti He calls—I have a desire to respond to H call, but I do not know how to respon Still He wants me. And He is merciful giving me great opportunities to prepare f His work. And I am incapable of prepar tion itself—I do not understand His way He is truly mysterious — Still I know H wants me."

That comes from *Meditations of a Indian Christian*, by M. A. Thomas.

Your sincere friend,

Max Warren

General Secretar

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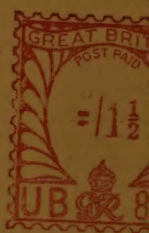

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BOOKS OF THE MONTH

‡*Religion and Society*, Edited by P. D. Devanandan and M. M. Thomas, Vol. IV, No. 3 Vol. V, No. 1. (Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, P.O. Box 5 BANGALORE 1, South India). Price 2 Rupees each (3*s.*).

‡*Human Person, Society and State*, Edited by P. D. Devanandan and M. M. Thomas (as above 1957. Price 3 Rupees (4*s.* 6*d.*).

*†*India's Changing Villages*, by S. C. Dube. (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958.) Price 25 by post 26*s.* 3*d.*

*†*The Transfer of Power in India*, by V. P. Menon. (Longmans Green & Co., 1957 Price 50*s.*, by post 51*s.* 6*d.*

*†*Face to Face*, by Ved Mehta. (Collins, 1958.) Price 16*s.*, by post 17*s.* 2*d.*

**Great Venture—The Church of South India in Action*, by A. H. Dammers. (Highway Pres 1958.) Price 2*s.* 6*d.*, by post 2*s.* 10*d.*

*†*Worship in the Church of South India*, by T. S. Garrett. (Lutterworth Press, 1958 Price 7*s.* 6*d.*, by post 8*s.*

*†*Meditations of an Indian Christian*, by M. A. Thomas. (S.C.M. Press, 1958.) Price 5 by post 5*s.* 6*d.*

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† May be borrowed from C.M. House Library.
‡ May be read in C.M. House Library, or ordered direct.